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THE CHURCHMAN

March, 1911.

The Month.

**Prayer-Book
Revision.** It will be observed by our readers that this month's number of the CHURCHMAN is largely devoted to the urgent question of Prayer-Book Revision. Canon Beeching's forcible appeal, and the comments on it in the section of the Magazine that is reserved for "Discussions," can hardly fail to rouse the keenest interest. These contributions, however, will tell their own tale. We wish, in this place, to call attention to the existence of the General Committee for Promoting Prayer-Book Revision. It is a very large one, and is thoroughly representative. The names of those who form the Elective Committee, as well as the list of those who have become members, afford abundant proof of this. An "Explanatory Note" sent out by the Committee makes it clear that they are most anxious to maintain this representative character, and have "no thought of seeking to advance any merely sectional or party interests." The Committee has been formed under the conviction that the issue of the "Letters of Business" has given to the Church an opportunity which it would be wrong, as well as difficult, to shirk.

**Work of the
Committee.** A most useful feature of their work is the publication of a series of brief leaflets, in which the various objections that are advanced against *any* scheme of revision are handled—in our opinion—in a very convincing manner. As specimens of the objections, we note

the following :—That the matter may be left entirely in the hands of the Bishops ; that we must avoid going to Parliament ; that we must not risk a schism in the Church ; that a Supplement would give us all that is necessary ; that the Prayer-Book is better as it is, without any alteration at all. In addition to the discussion of these detailed points, it is shown in the most cogent way that what we want is a Prayer-Book for the needs of to-day. The Prayer-Book has undergone revision at various earlier stages of its history, and there is, therefore, no *a priori* objection to a further process of revision, provided that sufficient reason can be shown. Those who wish to inform themselves as to the nature and work of the Committee, and to receive for their own reading the various leaflets issued, can do so by application to the Secretary at 65, Banbury Road, Oxford.

The pronouncement recently made by Dr. Knox as to the usage of the Eucharistic vestments in the Diocese of Manchester is a matter of common knowledge. There has followed a letter from the Archdeacon of Rochdale, informing the Bishop that

“ The feeling exists among those who hold ‘ moderate ’ views upon matters of ritual (and they comprise by far the larger section of Churchmen in your Lordship’s diocese) that the pronouncement is unduly severe on another section of Churchmen, especially as the Ornaments Rubric is under discussion of Convocation by the direction of the Letters of Business.”

The Bishop, in his reply, devotes himself mainly to the matter of the churches into which vestments may be introduced after the publication of his letter. He points out that to introduce vestments into churches which are now being built and consecrated is, in effect, to prejudice the issue which the Convocations at present have before them. It is to avoid any such prejudice that he is taking these steps. He puts his finger on the root of the trouble when he points out that the vestments are introduced without consulting either himself, as Bishop, or the patron of the benefice, or the parishioners. The spirit of anarchy and wilful self-assertion that inspires incumbents to such

high-handed flouting of all authority is one of the most ominous and deplorable symptoms in the present condition of the Church.

The suggestion made at the Islington Meeting by Canon Hay Aitken, that an interchange of pulpits between Anglican and Nonconformist ministers is desirable, and would tend to promote unity, has been discussed, from many sides and at great length, in the *Westminster Gazette*. A survey of all the correspondence leads to the conclusion that Nonconformist ministers in general would welcome the proposal; while Anglicans, with certain eminent exceptions, are totally averse to it. Under these circumstances we are—for our own part reluctantly—driven to admit that the time is not yet ripe for any such project. Two points in particular are worthy of consideration. The first is, the peril of premature and ill-considered action. For ourselves, we hope for, and are prepared to work for, not only unity, but reunion. We believe that the missionary effectiveness of Christendom to-day is more hindered by its damaging disunity than by any other obstacle. With this conviction, and these hopes, we hesitate to advocate a project which, while commending itself to the few, would evoke from the many such a storm of acrimonious hostility that any hopes of Christian reunion would be blasted and ruined, perhaps for many generations.

The other point is this. What is needed at the present time is not the introduction of a new practice, but the cultivation of a better spirit and the more adequate use of existing opportunities for combined Christian work. A paragraph in Sir George White's letter expresses this clearly :

“It is a question of spirit—there are clergymen who treat their Free Church brethren as equals, and recognize in them brother-workers with whom they can cheerfully co-operate; there are a large number who patronize ‘these Dissenters’ in connection with certain work, but in a spirit of aloofness, whilst there are, I fear, a large number still who regard them as schismatics and the people to which they minister as not a Church.”

It may be that Churchmen have not always a monopoly of unbrotherly spirit. But until we understand better the nature of the Catholic Church and our heritage in it ; until we cease to speak of " Dissent " in our parishes as though it were a species of malaria, and to regard its exponents as social aliens ; until we have learned to take our stand, not with reluctance and inward misgivings, but with whole-hearted conviction, on some such common platform as that afforded by the Bible Society ; in a word, until we use, in the spirit of Christ, our existing opportunities for intercourse and co-operation to the full, it will be useless even to dream of an interchange of pulpits.

The whole correspondence on this difficult subject has been conducted with ability and with great frankness. One contribution, however—that of Archdeacon Wilberforce—seems to us to stand out conspicuously, both for courage and for clear realization of the essence of the matter in question. As it may not have come under the notice of our readers who do not happen to see the *Westminster Gazette*, we feel that we are doing a service in transcribing the whole of it for their benefit. The passage comes in a sermon preached at St. John's, Westminster. Speaking of interchange of pulpits, the Archdeacon says :

" I have longed for it ; I shall not live to see it, but some of you younger ones will. I believe that the highest interests of the nation are involved. I have personally had to suffer for my convictions. The severest ecclesiastical censure has in times past fallen upon me for preaching in Nonconformist chapels. I believe that under certain obvious restrictions the interchange of pulpits between ministers of different denominations would break down sectarianism, awaken the slumbering Christ-Spirit, and bring about the realization of the ideal Church. A very estimable but ecclesiastically hide-bound member of the Anglican Church asks a direct question that must be answered : ' Are the ministers of other denominations in this country schismatics ? Would it not be an utter contradiction to pray, as we do, to be delivered from all schism, and then to come to St. John's Church and find a leading schismatic in the pulpit ? ' But what is schism ? Schism is breaking away from the unity of the body of Christ. If schism means the conscientious separation from any visible Church, I ask, From which Church ? Which of the visible Churches does not consider all the others not in communion with itself guilty of the sin of schism ? The Holy Catholic Church

is in its essence a spiritual and indivisible body, wholly independent of its external manifestation and government, with regard to which there may be, and ought to be, an almost unlimited divergence of opinion and practice without any rupture of true spiritual unity. The real Church, the body of Christ, may be said in its essence to resemble the internal fire of the earth, one undivided glowing mass, finding its way to manifestation by means of many volcanoes. Many people believe that our Lord Jesus Christ will visibly return to this earth and call to Himself His Church; do you really imagine that it would only be members of the Church of England that He would call? Would He call St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and turn the City Temple and Westminster Chapel out to gnashing of teeth? Don't you think He would call a number that no man can number of all nations, saints who have realized their true relationship to God? Are not you guilty of schism if you consider those who do not walk with you to be outside the fold of the Church? Hundreds who are illustrious for learning, piety, and devotedness have been, and are, in Dissenting communions; do you deny that they are in Christ? If you do, how do you account for the manifold fruits of the Spirit which they exhibit? If you do not deny it, then to be in Christ is surely to be in the Holy Catholic Church. He only is a schismatic who ceases to be united by faith to Christ, and the idea that the sin of schism against which you pray in the Litany means separation from the visible communion of the Church of England, when weighed in the balances—well, it is ridiculous; it may without loss be consigned to the limbo of the exploded fallacies of the past. When we pray in the Church of England Litany against schism we ought to have in our minds, not Dissenters, but the separations of our own Church, the religious partisanship so common among ourselves, our being divided into factions under party names, with representative newspapers stirring up internecine warfare. That is schism of the body, that is wounding the heart of Christ, that is rending the seamless robe of the Lord Jesus."

The
 Aftermath of
 Islington.

The Islington Meeting this year has given rise, as was almost to be expected, to a long correspondence in the columns of our contemporary, the *Record*.

The discussion has centred round the question of Higher Criticism. Some writers have condemned, some have upheld, the normal critical position. In the main the discussion has been carried on with reasonableness and good feeling. We do not propose to follow it here in any detail. One thing has clearly emerged—viz., that men who are indubitably entitled to be regarded as loyal and earnest Evangelical clergymen have been found on both sides. This, at any rate, suggests that Evangelicalism is not to be determined by our attitude to the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis. This inference we believe

to be true. We hold no brief at the moment for or against the critics. In the main we are inclined to a conservative attitude, or, at any rate, an attitude of suspended judgment in relation to many of the claims of criticism, but we are loyal to the properly safeguarded right of private judgment. If a critic is loyal to Article VI., and does not wantonly fly in the face of Article XX., we are not disposed to inquire too closely as to his views on the composite character of the books of Samuel or the authorship of some of the Psalms. If he holds the traditional teaching of Evangelicalism on the Doctrine of Conversion, on the Atonement, and on the Spiritual Life; if he believes the Sacraments to be means of grace, and not mere channels; if he believes the Bible to be the revelation of God to man, final and complete for this dispensation, we would welcome him, despite his criticism, as an Evangelical in the truest sense of the word. We want unity, and we want liberty. We shall never gain the former if we needlessly limit the latter; and we cannot believe that that limitation is needful which excludes every adherent of the Graf-Wellhausen theory.

"Ne Temere." The Papal Bull on mixed marriages has caused considerable discussion in Ireland and not a little in England. The Church of Rome has decided that a mixed marriage in a Protestant place of worship is no marriage, and has apparently acted upon its decision in one case at least to the breaking up of a home, with much consequent misery. We are told that this particular action will not be repeated. Perhaps the outburst of feeling that it aroused, culminating in a monster meeting in Dublin, with the Archbishop of Dublin in the chair and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church amongst the speakers, has made repetition impossible, at least for the present. An attempt has been made to belittle the matter on the ground that the feeling aroused is inspired by party politics. But surely it raises an issue which must not be lost sight of. We recognize the right of the Church of Rome to legislate for its own members. We recognize the right to discourage mixed

marriages; we claim both these rights for ourselves. In connection with the Royal Commission upon Divorce, we may be compelled presently to emphasize the former right. But we are entirely at one with the resolution of the Dublin meeting, which demanded that there should be secured to those who have been married in accordance with the law of the land freedom from interference from clergymen, or others, of any denomination whatsoever, that may lead to a violation of the marriage contract. If the Belfast story is true it is disgraceful. In view of the names of those present at the Dublin meeting, we cannot but believe that it is true. We have no political ends to serve here, but we do hope that Englishmen—Churchmen and Nonconformists alike—will not allow this incident to pass into oblivion because they are afraid of its political effect. The attitude of the *British Weekly* does seem to suggest some such danger in the case of that representative Nonconformist journal.

Rescue Work. At a private Conference of Rescue Workers held last October, a paper (to be obtained free on receipt of a stamp from Miss James, Hampstead Way, Hendon) of pathetic interest was read by Miss E. Macdougall. The writer tells a terrible story of misery and ruin, and pleads for certain changes in the administration of the law. The subject is a difficult one to discuss in a public print, but we have ventured to refer to it here because we believe that the care of these little ones, ruined by the evil passions of men, is of the highest concern to the Christian Church, and we venture to commend this paper to any of our readers who work amongst the fallen, and to any who have a share in the administration of the law. We venture to quote Miss Macdougall's words, and to leave them with our readers:

“‘What is written in the Law? How readest thou?’ We gain a wider view of our duty in this matter through those simple, strong words of His. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.’ ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour.’ If these words were strong in the hearts of all men there would be no need for a discussion upon the ‘Administration of the Law.’ It is woman’s work—

by our own lives of loyalty to these two Laws—to influence man to be strong and true.

“Our Lord was asked to criticize the administration of Moses’ Law, when the woman who had broken a part of it was brought to Him. We remember his attitude. No criticism of the Law, or of the offence, but those simple, piercing words which stirred effectually the consciences of those present ; and then the power of His silent stooping down.

“As rescue workers we can do little to alter or set right what seem to us evils in administration, but we can ponder silently the high ideals of Christ’s Law, and give expression to our thoughts by using constantly the petition :

“That it may please Thee to bless and keep the magistrates and judges, giving them grace to execute justice and to maintain truth.’”

Discussions.

In calling attention to the “Discussions” which are inaugurated on p. 226 of this number, we may take the opportunity of indicating the conditions by which this section of the magazine will be governed : (1) The space is set apart for conference and discussion, not for letters. The CHURCHMAN has no correspondence column ; hence, any contribution, long or short, will take the form of a signed article, and not of a letter. (2) The discussion will be strictly limited to matter that has appeared in the CHURCHMAN, either in the same or the immediately preceding number. (3) The writer of the article on which comment is made will be entitled to a reply. Then the discussion of that particular topic will end. (4) The Editors will gladly welcome the free expression of varied forms of opinion. They merely reserve for themselves the usual editorial right to decide what shall, or shall not, appear in this, as in other parts of the magazine. They also disclaim responsibility for opinions that may be expressed by various writers in the course of future discussions.

